

'Avengers, Renewed'

Thanos chuckled, turning, the Infinity Stones glinting in his gold gauntlet, crackling with raw energy and magic.

"I am inevitable." He held up his hand and put his fingers together to snap. Tony's eyes widened, and he looked down at his hands. *He'd failed. He hadn't gotten the stones.*

He leaped towards Thanos, determined to stop him, to save everyone, so that every death would have been worth it-

The snap rang out through the battlefield, and everything turned white.

...

A girl ran through the rain, her school uniform soaked down to the very thread. Her shoe splashed through a puddle, and she frowned, her socks now dripping wet inside her shoe, but kept going.

School didn't end for another three hours; she'd escaped during lunch. But she

couldn't take it anymore. She wouldn't miss anything. Just more lectures from her teachers about their humble savior, Thanos, who had created humanity 500 years prior. Created everything, humans, the world, the peace that came with it.

Sometimes it didn't seem like that. Her city, though polished up, seemed like ruins sometimes, shells of a different reality. Her parents called her crazy, but sometimes just she had this sinking- deep in her gut. She knew something wasn't right.

The girl splashed through puddles of mud and soon, the cityscape began to fade away. Her muscles burned, but she kept running. Something was pulling her, beckoning her, almost.

So she ran.

Soon enough, she came to a field. She'd driven by here a couple of times, but never paid it attention, once it was outside the city limits. It had always struck her as odd, because even though it was acres of land, no one seemed to own it, and no grass grew.

She slowed her run a bit and looked around. The muddy landscape stuck to her shoes and it had an abandoned vibe to it. She walked deeper into the expanse, until the fog covered the city line and she couldn't tell which direction was which.

Suddenly, she spawned forward, tripping over a rock. Something tore through her stocking, with the awful sound of ripping fabric and skin. She cried out in pain as she hit the ground, dirt mixing in with her cut with a sting.

She squeezed her eyes shut from the pain, and then, taking deep breaths through clenched teeth, stood up and examined the cut. It wasn't too deep, but it hurt *bad*, and she knew that the bloodstains wouldn't come out of her stockings any time soon, so that would be fun to explain to her parents.

She turned angrily to see what had tripped her, limping back to the spot where her crimson

blood stained the dirt. It wasn't a rock- it was a slab of concrete, buried in the ground. Like a pillar. She'd never seen one of these before. But as she looked around, she saw more and more. Her brain sparked.

The rain must have washed away a bunch of layers of dirt, she thought suddenly. Re-earthing these things. Whatever they are.

As she looked about, she realized they were in the shape of a building frame. There must have used to be a building here. She would have been standing right in front of it.

But what building? And when was it built if it's been buried this deep for 500 years?

Curious, the girl walked forward a bit and found what had cut her; a piece of glass, sticking out of the dirt. Frowning, she leaned down, ignoring the pain in her shin and the mud that splattered on her skirt. There appeared to be letters on it, half buried but miraculously still intact. An 'e', and a 'n'. And was that half of a 'g' or an 'o'?

Her curiosity peaked, she started to dig, brushing her wet stringy red hair out of her face as she did. Multiple other pieces of glass were found beside it. Broken, but clearly a part of the same piece initially. All had lettered printed on, extremely faded and barely readable but still present.

Soon, it was done. She carefully inched the pieces together with dirt covered hands, a feeling of satisfaction blooming when they fit. A single word formed in the old glass, and she used her sleeve to wipe it off and squinted to see the faded word.

"Av..." she said aloud, her voice semi drowned out by the wet downfall. "Avengers. The Avengers?"

Frowning, she looked closer.

"The Avengers." She whispered. *What did that mean? What had it meant, when this structure was built? Was this built in a time before Thanos?*

Suddenly, a voice rang out in the darkness, a familiar voice. She scrambled to her feet, forgetting about her injury and earning a boatload of pain. Still, she limped towards her mother's voice.

"Mama?" She called out.

A shadow in the fog started sprinting toward her.

"There you are! You had us so worried!" Her mother grabbed her and kissed her forehead.

"Thank goodness we have that tracker in your phone, otherwise we'd have never found you! What have you done to your uniform- and when did you cut yourself?!"

"Mama, I'm fine," the girl rolled her eyes.

"Natasha, I have a right to worry," her mother scolded. "Now come on, the car isn't far, hurry."

Natasha looked back at the ruins, and swore she'd come back to this place. She'd find out what it was. Where it came from. Who the Avengers were, and what they had done, and why her world felt so... fake. Lied about.

"The Avengers." She whispered.

It felt like a calling. A purpose, spoken on her tongue. Like it was... in her blood, somehow.

It felt like another chance.